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Poems of THERESE

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Poems of Therese







Venia
Theresa.

THE
LITTLE
BOOK
OF
LOVE
NEW YORK & LONDON
The Knickerbocker Press

1899





o

Poems of Therese

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

BY
ELLEN FROTHINGHAM

WITH A SKETCH OF THE POET
BY
ANNA FULLER



G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK & LONDON
The Knickerbocker Press
1899

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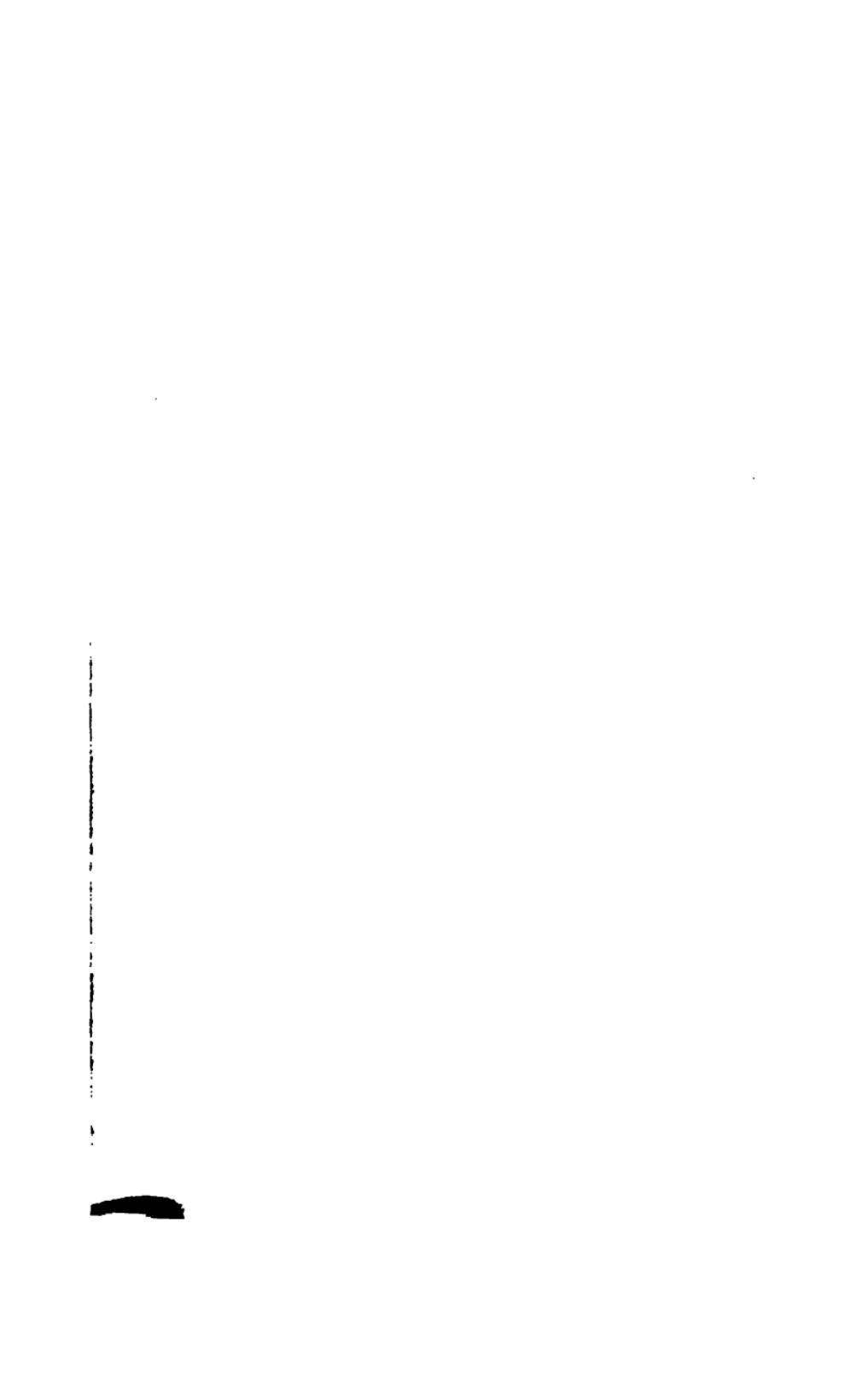
Contents

	PAGE
SKETCH OF THERESE	I
THE MAGIC TOUCH	23
THE BLACKBIRD	25
VIOLETS	27
DEAD LEAVES IN SPRING	29
AT SUNSET	31
PRESENTIMENT	33
THE LAKE	34
GOLDEN GLEAMS	35
SUMMER EVENING	36
DANDELIONS	37
THE CANDLE OF THE LORD	39
SCATTERED PETALS	41
THE BELATED SWALLOW	43
EVENING	44
THE FORGOTTEN LAY	46
THE LOST LEAF	48
ABNEGATION	51
ROSES	53
AUTUMN SONG	54
BUT A FEW DAYS AGO	56
PETULANCE	58
DESPAIR	60

Contents

	PAGE
THE WANDERER	62
A DESOLATE ISLAND	63
WHIRLING LEAVES	64
THE DOUBTING SOUL	65
FIREFLASH	67
SONG (Written to Music)	70
REMORSE	72
THE VANISHED HOPE	74
LOVE, GOOD NIGHT !	76
PEACE	78
A JOY HALF PAIN	80
I FLUNG MY CARE TO THE SEA	81
LETHE	83
THE SLEEPING SORROW	84
THE RETURN	86
IN EXTREMIS	87
THE DEAD	89
FALSE FREEDOM	93
THE CRY FOR JUSTICE	96

Poems of Therese



Therese

TO the enlightened German of to-day the little old walled town of Hessen where Therese used to live would doubtless appear a type of the commonplace, a nest of the Philistines, a spot altogether too obscure for consideration. It was reserved for a certain inexperienced and impressionable American girl of some twenty years ago to discover the charm of that humble picturesqueness and antiquity that dwell in the narrow streets of the old town, lending a half-pathetic interest to the gaunt old church of Charlemagne's day and the massive stone bridge only two or three centuries its junior. What though Charlemagne never saw that church? What though

though no imperial Frederick or Maximilian ever crossed that bridge? To the American girl, in the facile enthusiasm of inexperience, those two uncouth products of the *Mittelalter* stood for the ninth and the twelfth centuries, with which she had never before come into visible and material touch.

A long summer's sojourn in the old town served but to endear it to the stranger; for if, after a time, the bald antiquity, undignified by great associations, somewhat lost its significance, the loss was more than made good by a certain quaintly idyllic character which gently impressed itself upon the mind from day to day. There were peasants in mediæval costumes coming in from the adjacent villages; there were shepherds tending their flocks on the surrounding hills. In the many-aisled, carefully preserved woodland of the vicinity deer

ity deer showed themselves ready to play at hide-and-seek. Nightingales were to be heard, of an evening, singing their hearts out in the leafy coverts of the gardens that clustered on the banks of the Fulda, outside the contracted limits drawn by the crumbling town walls ; while, in the ruinous towers that once guarded these walls, the owl had an occasional word to say at twilight,—a weird and ghoulish word, particularly gratifying to an ear accustomed rather to the sweet but hardly blood-curdling note of our New England song-birds. Best of all was the river itself, the tranquil Fulda, encircling in its wide curve, here the nightingale-haunted garden, there the crowding waterside houses, and reflecting in its clear mirror, bridge and ruined wall, sky and field-flower, as it flowed on through the meadows and past the Rosenhöhe lying a long half-mile beyond the town limits.

At

At the Rosenhöhe, in the grace and distinction of apartness, both local and personal, dwelt the Herr Kanzlei-Rath with his family,—and his daughter was Therese.

It has never seemed worth while to inquire too closely as to the exact nature and functions of that much respected official, a Kanzlei-Rath. The title has a commanding sound which flatters the mind with suggestions of one high in the counsels of the State. And if, practically, the office would appear to involve no duties more onerous than a daily stroll to the town, or a jaunt in a very cumbersome official vehicle through an idyllic landscape, this circumstance tallies well with the accepted fact that the exactions of a given calling are frequently in inverse ratio to its emoluments.

Be this as it may, the Herr Kanzlei-Rath in question was rarely deterred by official

official cares from devoting the latter half of his day to the occupation of his choice,—namely: to pacing up and down between rows of his high-growing roses, smoking the while a contemplative pipe of incredible length of stem, and pausing from time to time to knock an intruding beetle off a rose-leaf, or, better still, to inhale a draught of fragrance which, by some genial alchemy, was straightway transmuted into a look of rapture on the fine, rugged face.

The Rosenhöhe was a stucco-clad villa, having a red-tiled roof which showed sharp against an abrupt green hill at the rear, and looking, through deep-browed windows, down a series of terraces and across a wilderness of roses to the winding stream of the Fulda. Well might the Herr Kanzlei-Rath, and the Frau Kanzlei-Rath too, be proud of their rose-garden! Here, in

the

the open air, bloomed Jacqueminots and Mermets and Brides, the stately Josephine and the modest Bonceline,—more than fifty varieties, known by name and fondly cherished of the master,—all straining upward on their tall, supporting palings and vying with one another in a wonder of bloom and fragrance. And the rarest blossom of the Rosenhöhe was Therese.

She was still a shut bud that first summer, for she was but sixteen and she had led a secluded life. The Rosenhöhe was the only gentleman's villa in all that countryside, and there was something in the very spirit of the place that typified the unpretending apartness of its inhabitants. If a passer-by paused at the sunset hour to muse upon the lavish beauty of the rose-garden, he might search long without discovering any way of approach. The rough stone coping which bordered the

lowest

lowest of the several terraces was unbroken by any step or other means of ingress ; the villa, hospitable as its aspect was, looked down upon him in an abstracted, unsuggestive manner. And we may be sure that neither the Herr Kanzlei-Rath among his roses, nor the placid Hausfrau, plying her knitting-needles in the doorway, nor yet Therese, feeding the doves that cooed and fluttered and alighted on her shoulder, paid much heed to the stranger. Not until he had reluctantly passed on and had left the rose-garden a dozen rods behind him on his way toward the town, might he note a certain modest gate ;— the very gate through which, in a happy hour, the American girl—the *Fräulein Miss*, as the peasant folk called her—was conducted.

For it was on just such a late afternoon in middle May that the *Fräulein Miss* paid her

her first call at the Rosenhöhe. All unsuspecting of the lasting joy and profit in store, she entered the little gate with her companion and, ascending a short incline, turned abruptly to the right into a broad, shaded avenue between close-growing plum-trees. At the end of this twilight vista a corner of the villa gleamed white and remote, and presently the way led out of the shadow into fairyland.

The long level rays of the setting sun were striking across the green meadows and the shining Fulda and the multitudinous beauty of the rose-garden, transforming the atmosphere into "one sea of light," and on the flags before the house door, in the very heart of the "golden shimmer," stood Therese feeding her doves. The birds circled about her, making low, gurgling sounds, their feathers shot through with the last rays of the setting sun, to which

which soft effulgence the thick braids of black hair wound several times about the head of the young girl answered with a dusky gleam. Is it any wonder that, to this day, as often as the *Fräulein Miss* hears the accent of the *Vaterland*, her thoughts turn first to the Rosenhöhe where, "wrapped as in a glowing flood," stands a tall girlish figure looking out upon the newcomer from among a cloud of doves with a shy yet searching glance.

It was surely on such an evening as this that the young recluse of the Rosenhöhe wrote the little poem which her translator has called "At Sunset," and when one reads its closing lines,

" Childlike breathes the spirit low,—
‘ May not joy be nigh?’ "

one sees again the shyly questioning look in a pair of dark, girlish eyes, and the startled,

startled, expectant pose of a dusky head.

For Therese was writing verses even then,—even then she was looking out from her seclusion with a singularly venturesome spirit upon a world of emotions and passions with which a shut bud would seem to have little concern. Perhaps all young things are stirred with dreams, perhaps all buds hide an unguessed perfume within their shut petals. Yet surely it is not often that those early dreams escape in the fragrance of poetic expression ;—as a rule, the buds have a way of keeping their secrets very close.

But if Therese found it natural to write down her own errant fancies she was even more eager to read those which others had been kind enough to record for the delectation of such as she ; and, indeed, it must have been largely from books that she gathered

gathered the impetus for those more daring and impassioned poems, the very subject of which lay so manifestly outside the range of her personal experience.

“Yes,” the Frau Kanzlei-Rath used to say, with a humorous appreciation of her daughter’s eccentricities, “all that Therese needs to make her happy is a bit of paper. If there is something written on it, she can read it ; if it is blank, she thinks to herself : ‘Now I can write something !’ Why, when she was in her cradle she was contented by the hour if only she had a bit of paper to play with !” and the good lady would sip her coffee at the round green table before the house door, casting a quizzical glance over the rim of her cup at Therese, whose five-o’clock draught of that goodly beverage was perhaps cooling, while she turned the leaves of a book.

Now it chanced that from the very first
the

the *Fräulein Miss* presented herself to the imagination of the young student in the favourable light of a page on which were inscribed the characters of an unknown tongue,—thanks to which fortunate circumstance, the personality of the stranger was promptly invested with an interest that might otherwise have been lacking. And, since Therese, with all her poetic absences and vagaries, was ever on the alert for mental acquisitions, not many days passed before the newcomer was engaged in transferring to a curiously receptive mind, such imperfect knowledge as she possessed of her own tongue. Insomuch that long before the impromptu teacher had come to a satisfactory understanding with herself as to certain grammatical rules of the English language which had hitherto been followed in the happy unconsciousness of habit, her pupil was translating English poems

poems into very charming German verse. In the course of that six months' summer she made for her father and mother a little collection of these translations, on the first leaf of which was inscribed this pretty conceit :

“A translated poem is but a pressed flower. Plucked from its stem, unlighted by its own sun, its fragrance and freshness vanish. And yet, pale and dead though it be, one can fancy what its form and colour were when it bloomed sweet and fair in its native soil.”

Nor did the ambitious verse-maker stop short at translations. With the temerity of youth she even went so far as to compose lines of her own through the new and fascinating medium of a foreign tongue. There is a curious, exotic flavour to the English of these which tempts one to transcribe two or three specimens. The following

following, for instance, with its quaint melancholy, seems sufficiently characteristic to take its place in this slight sketch :

“ There is a pale, small, silent wish
 That creeps into the hearts of men ;
 When once 't is there it grows and lives
 And will not be subdued again.

“ From out the heart into the eyes
 It steals, and makes them deep and sad ;
 It sharpens sight and throws a veil
 O'er everything so fair and glad.

“ It creeps into the voice and turns
 Its silver tones to funeral peal ;
 It stamps upon a merry face
 Its own dark sign—a mourner's seal.

“ It gives a slowness to thought,
 A sudden heaviness to breath ;
 It turns from love to God and man,—
 That yearning, silent wish for death.”

And this :

“ How silent is the ancient town
 That was so loud before ;
 The billows only plaintively
 Sing, breaking on the shore.

There

" There is no sound, no human voice,
 No star, on earth no light;
The doleful music of the sea
 Comes floating through the night.

“ It is the same deep, mournful tale
When the day is loud and bright,
But, like the dreams of forgotten love,
‘T is only heard at night.”

As to the lines which follow, it must be owned that their unadorned finality bestows upon them a certain humorousness of character which was probably far from the intention of the youthful philosopher !

“ Some have painted and some have sung,
And some have carved their thoughts in stones,
And some have digged up ancient tombs,
And have discovered gold and bones.

“ Others have dreamed their lives away,
In love and hope, in sorrow and jest ;
Those have prayed and these have sinned,
And all have died and are at rest.”

The foregoing examples, to be sure, suffice to prove that the young poet was wise

wise enough to reserve for her own tongue such thoughts and imaginings as really pressed for utterance. Yet Therese was never much given to appreciation of these early poems of hers, whether written in German or in English. They were jotted down upon chance scraps of paper, or inscribed in an exasperatingly illegible hand on the remnants of old copy-books. The *Fräulein Miss* takes some credit to herself for having rescued more than one of them from imminent destruction. She only regrets that she did not succeed in impressing the mind of their author with a sufficient sense of their value to secure for them a like respectful treatment at her hands.

When, some seven years later, the *Fräulein Miss* returned to Germany and spent a month with her friend in a romantic nook of the Black Forest, nearly all of the
poems

poems included in this collection had been written and preserved, as by a miracle, from destruction. At that time Therese, under the *nom-de-plume* of Marie Herbert, was already entering upon a successful literary career, certain fruits of which she imparted with undisguised pride to a willing listener ; but it was always with a deprecatory, apologetic air that she read her verses, and only with amused tolerance that she suffered them to be copied.

“All German girls and boys write verses,” she would declare, as if in allusion to some such inevitable visitation of childhood as whooping-cough or measles.

And yet these early poems of hers seem to the few who know them—and in spite of occasional crudities of feeling and expression—to have a charm all their own ; the charm of unpremeditated fancy, of impetuous frankness, of youthful abandonment

ment and exaggeration if you will. The plaintive, even tragic tone which so largely predominates in this little volume is not the cry and protest of egotism, but rather the generous revolt of a young soul against a suffering not its own.

The year following that summer month in the Black Forest, life opened out for Therese in new channels, and there are few of our natural joys and sorrows which she has not known. But her muse—to borrow the pleasant old myth—has become more reticent. Her literary reputation grows from year to year, for her prose work is full of grace and originality, and her later poems have a value which may well be thought to exceed that of the earlier ones. Yet if those inequalities of rhythm and metre, those small audacities and perversities of form which a conscientious translator has faithfully reproduced, are

are no longer to be discovered, it is surely no less natural that with the advent of deeper personal experience the youthful spontaneity of expression should have suffered some restraint ; that the glamour, the fragrance of morning, should have given place to something else—better, it may be, but different—when Therese passed out from the poetic seclusion of the Rosenhöhe.

The Rosenhöhe too has fallen into other hands. One doubts whether the garden blooms as it used ; it would scarce surprise one to learn that steps had been cut straight from its very heart to the common thoroughfare with which in its happier days it had no commerce. If a Herr Kanzlei-Rath paces up and down its paths we may be sure that the roses know the difference ; if the daughter of the house feeds her doves in the sunset light
she

she can hardly have such stirring fancies as those which visited their friend of other days. Yes ;—let the new masters be who they will, in the thought of those who knew and loved the old, the Rosenhöhe of to-day stands deserted and bereft. The shut bud has opened, the rose has been plucked from its stem, and the garden mourns.

ANNA FULLER.

January, 1899.

Poems of Therese

At my finger's gentlest touch
Thou hast spread thy wings, and brightly
Flashing in the golden sun,
Through the ether floatest lightly.

Book and lips and life must wake,
Touched by a magician's fingers,
Ere their colours be revealed,
And the light that in them lingers.

The Blackbird

THE blackbird that was wont to sing
Before our windows, when the Spring
The fragrant linden-blow would bring,
Again is singing.

He sings the old familiar note
That through the chamber used to float,
Just as we watched the dancing mote
In the last sunbeam.

So rich, so melting is the strain,
Longings and memories wake again
And flush my cheek with joy and pain,
Oft as I hear it.

I know

I know not what the song would say,
Know not if it be grave or gay,
Would ask or question, yea or nay—
This only know I:—

Fain would I fold my hands and kneel,
The while into my eyes I feel
A glowing tear-drop slowly steal,—
From whence I know not.

Violets

FOREVER young, the heart of earth
Now opes itself anew to love ;
A gush of glowing violets gleams
O'er vale below and hill above.

I gather them into my hands,
Among the flowers my face I press ;
The first-born of the Spring are they,
Of sunshine born and happiness.

Not so I loved them when, a child,
In wood and field I lightly played,
As now, when on life's devious paths
My wandering feet have longer strayed.

Where

Where once to me was but a flower,
Is now a messenger from God,
A golden sign that still He lives
And that He guides me on the road.

Dead Leaves in Spring

IN the days of early springtime
Forth to greet the wood I hasted ;
There the rustling leaves of Autumn
'Neath my feet lay dry and wasted.

Buds of the new Spring were swelling,
Full of promise, soft and tender :—
Think ye not of foliage withered,
Sturdy oaks and birches slender ?

Do ye mourn to see them lying,
Or forgotten is the duty
In the golden Summer tendered,
Crowning you with pride and beauty ?

No

No reply? Upon your branches
Glad new life ye are receiving,
And the old joys that are withered
To the quiet earth are leaving.

Everywhere the same succession,
Human life or life of trees;
Quick the old love is forgotten,
Eagerly the new we seize.

New hope out of old hope blossoms;
None the path of life may tread,
But on withered leaves he tramples,
Cherished once, now sear and dead.



At Sunset

FAIR a scarlet flower blows
By the grassy way ;
Deep within its chalice glows
Sunset's crimson ray.

On its stem a butterfly
Spreads his shining wings,
Tinged with many a regal dye,
Wondrous, dazzling things.

Upward through the sunny air
Soars he in his flight ;—
Golden shimmer everywhere
Makes one sea of light.

Wrapped

Wrapped as in a glowing flood
Hill and tree and stream ;
Blessèd peace o'er all doth brood,
Like a lover's dream.

Tired winds are slumbering now,
All things dreaming lie ;
Childlike breathes the spirit low,—
“ May not joy be nigh ? ”

Presentiment

OFT in the height of Summer's golden
prime

There comes a touch of Autumn, and our
hearts

Feel that the glowing ardours of the sun
Have pressed the kiss of ripeness on the
fruit,—

That soon the drama of the year is done.

'T is but a premonition of decay,
'T is but a secret trembling of the heart,
A folding of the hands, a downward look,—
'T is but a heark'ning to the tread of Time,
Whose muffled echo warns the startled ear.

The Lake

'**M**ONG whisp'ring alders hid away,
By skies watched over night and
day,

Wrapped in a garb of fairy make,
Deep in the forest sleeps a lake.

Upward the waters softly gleam ;
Murmur my lips, as in a dream,
As were nought else to say or hear,—
" How dear thou art, ah Love, how dear ! "

As in the forest dreams the lake,
Wrapped in a garb of fairy make,
So deep within this heart of mine
There dwells a dream,—and it is thine !

Golden Gleams

POET souls by sweet Heaven sped,
Pearls of price on a golden thread,
Bright-hued bells in a mossy glade,
Golden gleams in the forest shade,—

Sunbeams deep in the pool below,
Radiant thoughts 'mid our human woe
Brightly illumining the path we tread,—
Golden gleams in the forest shade !

Summer Evening

NOW lays the fiery Summer Day
Her radiant garments, her glitter-
ing jewels
From her passionate breast ;
And, as a beauteous woman ere she sleeps
In supplication bends above her children,
So Night her blessing sheds.

Thus falls from my tumultuous breast,
That with sighs was convulsed, with long-
ings distracted,
All eager expectance ;
Resigned and still, in the hand of God
Hides my tormented heart, my tremulous
spirit,
Every craving for joy.

Dandelions

FAR o'er the lush meadow there runs a
sheen
Of wan and silvery white,
High over the roadside with immortelles
And blossoming orchids alight.

That is the torch of the dandelions ;
They ghostly and shimmering glow,
And into our faces with every breeze
A myriad flower-stars blow.

We children would break off the stalks
in our play
And scatter the stars with our breath ;
“ Now tell, O Candle of Life, we pray,
How far it may yet be to death ? ”

Oft

Oft was not a single star left on the stalk ;
We laughed, and — “ So soon ? ” we
would say ;—

Then over the meadow and into the wood
We ran singing and shouting away.

No flower-torch question we now by the
road,—

Time bears us along on its tide ;
Without any oracle know we full well
We ne'er have much longer to bide.

And o'er the lush meadow there runs a
sheen
Of wan and silvery white,
High over the roadside with immortelles
And blossoming orchids alight.

The Candle of the Lord

CREATION'S eyes are closing now,
The eyelids droop and fall,
The weary hie them to their rest,
And darkness covers all.

Yet many a soul in stillness prays,
Wakeful is many an eye,
And many a heart repines and grieves
As the long night goes by.

The high and holy Lord of Heaven
Moves silent through the land,
The golden moon His candle is,
He holds it in His hand.

When,

When, therefore, shines the moon on high,
In peace your eyelids close ;
The Sovereign Lord keeps watch for you
And blesses your repose.

Scattered Petals

WHITE roses that soon must be dying,

How sadly ye look in my face !

Your moment of pleasure is flying,

Then gone all your beauty and grace.

Soon flutter your petals in showers,

And fall at my wandering feet ;

Of all that rich perfume of flowers

No zephyr may capture the sweet.

Thou dream that with trembling I cherish,

Thou dream of a bliss yet to be,—

Oh, gather the leaves ere they perish,

Where scattered they lie on the lea.

And

And canst thou the petals so fashion,
That once more a rose be create,
Then not all in vain was thy passion ;—
O dream, that it be not too late !

The Belated Swallow

PLUCKING the snow-white bindweed
That in the hedge-row lay,
I saw a belated swallow ;—
'T was an autumnal day.

He passed so solitary
Against the pallid sky,
I could not help thinking sadly,—
How all alone am I !

Evening

SILENT the valley lies in twilight shimmer ;—

Upon th' horizon's edge, with fading light,
The setting sun rays up its parting glimmer.

Now seek the choir of birds, as comes the night,

Among the leafy boughs their place of hiding ;

Drowsy their sweet song grows, then ceases quite.

Already in the heavens the Moon is riding ;
Downward she smiles with sweet benignity,

As all were in her sovereign care abiding.

Soon

Soon Night holds sway in solemn majesty,
Lays her broad mantle over hill and plain,
Scatters her starry splendours royally,
Of precious, glittering gems a linked
chain ;—

With purest light ineffable it gleams,
And Nature sleeps as in a jewelled fane.
Transfigured 'neath the stars the valley
dreams,
As were a foretaste of that radiance given
Which from our Father's mansions wel-
coming streams.

White banners of the guardian hosts of
Heaven,
Clouds float above, a fleecy coronal,
And heavenward ascends the prayer at
even,—

“ Be with us, Lord, for thick the shadows
fall ! ”

Y **The Forgotten Lay**

CLOSE where the forest shadows lie
A child sat all alone;
He watched the floating clouds on high;
His clear eyes radiant shone.

Deep in his bosom, silently,
Tones of sweet music rang,—
An old and wondrous melody
That once his mother sang.

The music ne'er his heart forsook,
There it remembered lies,—
The melody his mother took
With her to Paradise.

But

But yet his tongue forgot the lay,—
The time had grown so long :
Strive to recall it how he may
He cannot catch the song.

O human heart, some well loved strain
In thy recesses lies,
A song that from life's joy and pain
Escaped to Paradise.

Y

The Lost Leaf

BEFORE the storm-wind flies a leaf,—
Oh, ho !

The stem that bore it pines in grief,—
Ah, woe !

The stem that bore it pines in grief,
Bereft ;

“ How safe the home that thou, O Leaf,
Hast left !

I held thee fast and kept from harms,
But thou

Wouldst never rest within my arms,
And now

The storm has come and thou art made
His prey,

In

In dust to-morrow to be laid
Away ! ”

Before life's tempest drives a heart,—

Oh, ho !

The weeping mother sits apart

In woe !

The weeping mother sits apart,

Bereft ;

“ How safe the haven thou, O Heart,

Hast left !

Thine innocence was swept away,

Defiled,—

The storm a prey, the storm a prey,

My child !

Thou wert my life and thou my pride,

My best,—

But thou hadst ever by my side

No rest ! ”

In

In Autumn's blast there drives a leaf,—
Oh, ho !
The stem that bore it pines in grief,—
Ah, woe !

Abnegation

QUIETLY thy days are flowing,
Serious thy countenance ;
Coming are the years and going,
Bringing no spring radiance.

Little children walk beside thee,
Growing up to man's estate ;
Happiness that was denied thee
Falls to them or soon or late.

Wishes for thyself ne'er cherished
Rise for others in thy prayer ;
Blessings in thy life that perished
Sheds around thy loving care.

Gentle

Gentle movements, gentle speaking,
Of thy joy or pain no breath ;
For thyself no eager seeking,—
Quiet life and quiet death.

Roses

GIVE me but a wreath of roses,
Born of sunshine and sweet air ;
Radiant would I be a moment,
Crowned with roses in my hair.

Roses, roses by the thousand
Over God's earth scattered lie,—
Just a handful I would gather,—
Poor and unadorned am I.

Quick the garland then may wither
And its beauty fade away ;
I shall have been crowned with roses
Though but for a single day !

Autumn Song

O H, come with me to the woods, Love !
Autumn is there to-day ;
Decked are the trees in their splendour,
Shining in brightest array.

Fairer, more glorious than ever,
In regal state they stand ;
Methinks for the passing of Summer
A gala they have planned.

With us as with the season,
When comes the hour to part,
Love with his radiant colours
Fills once again the heart ;

Stirs

Stirs once again the dull embers
Till high the flame aspires ;—
Shows once again the belovèd
Its living, glowing fires.

Y

But a few Days Ago

BUT a few days ago
Still wast thou mine ;
With joy was the world aglow,
With gleam and shine !

Rosy red came up the day
I sprang to greet,—
Forth on their gladsome way
Ran my swift feet !

But a few days gone by
Loosed was a band,—
Now no more eye meets eye,
Nor hand seeks hand.

Shadow

Shadow thou art to me,
Shade, too, I seem ;—
Dream grows reality,
Life grows a dream !

Petulance

AND they smile in my face,
And they prattle of thee,—
Oh, but leave me in peace
And speak not to me !

Fell one flower to the ground
While so many bloom gay ;
Shimmer and shine all around,
And laughter and May.

Yes, the Spring 's on her throne,—
Blest is all that hath breath ;
None but I weep alone,—
Might I weep me to death !

Ah,

**Ah, how sickly the green !
And the light glares so hot !
My Spring has all been,—
For thou lovest me not !**

Despair

HAST never on the ground lain stunned
and prostrate,
Thy forehead pressed upon the nearest
stone,
Worthless, unto thine inmost self abhor-
rent,
Of God forsaken, utterly alone ?

Hast never held thine arms convulsive
folded
Upon thy breast, that not a rising moan
Thy shut lips open to proclaim thy tor-
ment ?
Then hast thou not the depths of anguish
known.

Has

Has ne'er a little child's unconscious
laughter

Cut to thy heart like a two-edgèd blade ?

Then know'st thou not what in my soul I
suffer,—

Then never was thine innocence be-
trayed.

The Wanderer

A WANDERER on the mountain slope
Sees at his feet the village lie,
Bosomed in night,—his home, which yet
His longings ne'er could satisfy.

Cloudless had been the summer day,—
Whence comes the midnight tempest
hurled,
Since evening late, serene and mild,
Had lulled to rest a weary world ?

A wild storm-spirit rides abroad,
Startling the dreaming ear of night ;
Lo, from a house—he knows it well—
Flares sharply out a sudden light !

A Desolate Island

γ

A DESOLATE island in waste of
sea,—

No flower to grace it, no bush nor tree ;
No foot has e'er landed :
High dash the waves o'er it remorselessly,
No reef, no vestige of land to see ;
A vessel is stranded !

A desolate island in life's stern stress,—
No accents for others, no song, no caress ;
Nothing to cherish :
Woe to the lover who such lips would
press ;
Soon or late must he in anguish con-
fess :—
Better to perish !

Whirling Leaves

IN the dim old courtyard whirling,
Dance the autumn leaves together ;—
Up, ye whirling thoughts within me,
Up, and dance in wind and weather !
Chase and drive in dizzying circles,
Join the death-song's frantic measure ;
For ye too can sing the story
Of a glad life's shattered treasure !
For ye too can sing the story
Of a loyalty grown weary,
Of a heart whose flowers are faded,
Of an Autumn wan and dreary ;—
Up, and dance in wind and weather !

The Doubting Soul

MY life has no form nor substance,
A life that on dreams is fed,
And like a dream 't will fade away
When once I shall be dead.

The ends that I would fain have reached
Became another's prize ;
The love that I have prayed to win
Was given otherwise.

This soul of mine, all-gracious God !
Cared for so ill by me,—
What shall become of this my soul
In Thy supreme decree ?

So



So little happiness it had,
No pleasures, nought but tears,
And now, but for its thoughts alone,
A lifelong penance bears.

The soul that so for Thee has longed,
Yet questioned recklessly,—
What shall become of this poor soul
In Thy supreme decree ?

Fireflash

FIREFLASH on the mountainside,—
The rain came at even !
Splinters charred, wisps of straw
Through the forest-ways driven !

'T was gypsy-folk camped there,—
White their teeth, black eyes glancing,
On their lips reckless words,
In their mane ribbons dancing.

Not a place in the world
To take root in and flourish ;—
So the love between us,
Where no root was to nourish !

Oft

Oft we may meet again,
But as once we met—never !
Hand may be clasped in hand,
Yet the heart does not quiver.

Things indeed, manifold,
With smiles we talk over ;
But that which deeper lies
Shall neither discover.

Some passing madness 't was,
Each takes for granted ;
Or by some fevered dream
He had been haunted.

Eye meets eye calm and clear,
Trouble all banished ;
Flashes once kindled there
Quenched now and vanished.

Firefl



Fireflash on the mountainside,—

The rain came at even !

Splinters charred, wisps of straw

Through the forest-ways driven !



Song

(Written to music)

A LL thou hast done for me
Straightway forgot ;
Withered my heart as grass
That stayeth not.

Yet in dreams oftentimes
Sorely I rue
That a return so base
Met love so true.

Vanished all joy of life ;
One thing yet stayed :—
Oh, but the bitterness
Of love betrayed !

Like

Like a dishonoured grave,
Alien, alone,
There not a flower is seen,
No cross nor stone.

Colder than hate it is ;
Dead the drear spot ;—
Past all forgiveness now
He that forgot.

Remorse

KNOW'ST thou what raging over the
moorland drives

In the drear, mysterious midnight lone ?
What as with hands at thy window-pane
beats and strives,
Till the rooftree cracks and the branches
groan ?

The wind, men will tell you, 't is nought
but the wind ;

But I say,—'t is souls in remorse that are
tost,

'T is spirits in torment, accursèd and blind,
Bewailing their truth and their inno-
cence lost.

And

And if in thy bed thou rise trembling with
fear

To hark to the warring without and the
noise,

There suddenly falls on thy sleep-drunken
ear,

Familiar above the wild tumult — a
voice !—

Ah, fold then thy hands, O thou, once my
own love !

Ay, fold thy hands, minded of days long
ago,—

If a spark of remembrance thy heart can
yet move

To a thought upon him who once
wounded thee so.

The Vanished Hope

A S one who stands in utter desolation,
Watching the ship that her be-
loved bears,
Faints not nor fails till on the far horizon
The parting sail's last shadow disap-
pears ;—

Then flings her on the naked rocks,
despairing,
And strikes her face upon them in her
grief,
Till, quiet grown, she lists the clamorous
beating
Of greedy waves unceasing on the
reef ;—

So

So fare I now ; for somewhat has departed
That comes not back ; vanished a hope,
no more,—

Only a hope ; yet changed is all existence
To a grey waste of sea and sand-strewn
shore.



Love, Good Night !

LOVE, good night ! Across the meadows
comes to me the blackbird's singing ;
Faint with sunshine stand the roses where
a thousand buds are springing.—

Love, good night !

All my soul is sick with grieving ! Wasted
joy that gave no token,
Best of life that silent perished ;—ah, the
much I left unspoken !

Love, good night !

Soft I stroke thy hand at parting ; filled
my heart with bitter crying !

This

This remorse will come to haunt me at the
last when I am dying !—

Love, good night !

When the word that ne'er was uttered, and
the deed to life ne'er given,
And the unfulfilled devotion front me at
the bar of Heaven !—

Love, good night !

Peace

NO stranger was she erst to me,
Half unawares familiar, dear
As my own blood she grew to be ;
But now no more she lingers near.

I sought for her by night and day,
In streets and homes—she was not
there ;
Anxious, I watched the night away,
Called her aloud—'t was empty air.

North, south, east, west I sought her face,
Searched through the world on every
hand ;

But

**But nowhere did I find her trace,
Not on the sea and not on land.**

**Yet as I stood but yesterday
Beside a brother's bier and wept,
She entered as a vision may,
Pointing her hand to where he slept.**

**" He too was dear and near to me
As thou ; our paths went otherwise ;
No need of pilgrim shoon has he,
At peace within the shroud he lies ;**

**" At peace within my arms he rests "—
Her eyes met mine eyes yearningly ;
Then came the crowd of funeral guests
And like a zephyr vanished she !**



A Joy Half Pain

SCANT is my share of this world's joy,
And I for that have agonised ;
Fate gave it with a grudging hand,
And nights of tears my joy baptised.

Upon my breast it silent leans,
With drooping head, weary and weak,
And rarely lifts its eyes to mine,
In deep and tender tones to speak,—

“ Me hast thou known, year in, year out,
A joy half pain, but true to thee,
And no one but thyself can tell
How sweet is solitude with me. ”

I Flung my Care to the Sea !

I FLUNG my care to the sea, to the
sea,—

The deep sea cast it up again,
And washed it shoreward, where it lay
Uncovered in the sight of men.
Rebuked, ashamed, I thither went,
Took up my burden, penitent.

I digged a grave in the sand, in the sand,
And sank my burden fathoms deep,—
The storm-wind rent the sands apart
And waked it where it lay asleep ;—
I thought me saved forevermore,
At night it stood before my door.

No

82 **I Flung my Care to the Sea!**

“No friend was ever so true, so true,”
I spake, and let it in to me ;
It wound its arm about my neck
As fain it would my solace be ;
And as it close in my bosom lay,
Into my heart it stole its way.

I asked it then, “How long, how long ?
Wilt thou then never from me part ?”
With great and solemn eyes it gazed
From the recesses of my heart :—
“When man so true as I shall be,
Then go I forth, then art thou free.”

Lethe

STILL through life we wander seeking,
Seeking for the cooling river,
For the Lethe of the ancients,
Memory's fires to quench forever.

Somewhere are those waters flowing,
Underneath the earth and hidden ;
Clogged and overgrown their fountain,
Its approach to man forbidden.

Nay,—beside those shadowy borders
Is for us no sweet forgetting ;—
We must make our peace with memory,
Or our hearts consume in fretting.

The Sleeping Sorrow

EN as a child that sobs itself to sleep,
Within my heart a sorrow lies ;
The lips still quiver, and the wet lids keep
Trace of bright tears that overflowed
the eyes ;—
Hush thee ! Oh, hush !

I am so glad that it has sunk to rest
In the still chamber of my heart ;
The room is darkened, and all sounds sup-
pressed,
That nought my sorrow from its sleep
may start ;—
Hush thee ! Oh, hush !

May

May every evil dream be kept afar,
That often on sweet sleep alights,
And back into the tumult of life's war
The weary slumberer affrights ;—
Hush thee ! Oh, hush !

The Return

HARD is it to retrace our footsteps
When once too far from home
beguiled ;
One sallies forth accoutred bravely,
But home returns,—a groping child.

Forth would we fare in golden morning,
Narrow our bounds, with hope we burn ;
But, missed our goal, when comes the
evening
To find the homeward path we turn :—

That path mysteriously winding,
Where of our feet no trace has stayed ;
That path, but late o'erspread with verdure,
And now with rough stones overlaid.

In Extremis

THOU alone, Lord, art strong to deliver !

Out of my hands the rudder slippeth ever !

Adrift ;—on the wide waste of waters no track !

Nearer the terrible rocks frown and nearer ;
Ghastly the shapes through the storm-rift
loom clearer

Of vessels here stranded and flung to wrack !

Screaming, the sea-gulls are hovering o'er
me,

Half

Half shrouded in mist the dread shore
lies before me ;—

By towering waves I am shattered and
tost !

Loud in my ears rings their deafening
thunder ;

Near yawns the abyss—it is drawing me
under !

Save, Lord ! or engulfed is Thy servant
and lost !

The Dead

QUIET the Dead 'neath the Living are
lying,
Their eyelids fast shut, their hands
passive and cold ;
At rest is their heart and their lips have
grown silent,
Their raiment is dropping with dust and
with mould.
And noisily life surges onward above them,
Full many a foot tramples over their
bed ;
So deep is their rest, not a sound that be-
trayeth
The dreams and the hopes that are lying
there dead.

Yet

Yet among us, the Living, behold the Dead
moving !

They seem to be buried, yet still do they
live ;

Communion they hold, though in language
unspoken ;

With love, with rebuke, solemn judgment
they give.

No footstep is heard, yet they sojourn
among us,

Redressing the wrongs they were witness
of here ;

Forth come they from out the abode of the
blessèd,

To succour and comfort whom still they
hold dear.

And over the Living the Dead hold do-
minion,—

Authority

Authority which upon earth they knew
not ;
For mighty the Dead, and in thoughts that
survive them
Full many are kings who were long
since forgot.
In word and in deed do the Dead hold
dominion,
The stone which they laid shall forever
endure ;
The Dead are our teachers,—whate'er our
endeavour,
Upon their foundations our building is
sure.
The Dead in their cerements are quietly
lying,
And yet before God they are hymning
His praise ;
For

For us who are living they make supplication,

And upward to Him bear our poor earthly lays.

The Dead are the bond betwixt God and the Living,

Through them love awaits us when ended the strife ;

Laid deep under earth the Dead seem there to slumber,

Yet mighty their grasp on the issues of life.

False Freedom

GOD, is Thy boasted freedom then
nought but a lie?
Pinions Thou givest for flight where no
space is to fly?
Givest us eyes to behold what we ne'er
may attain?
Power of thought that only consumeth the
brain?
Hands but to grasp after shapes that as
phantoms depart?
Love Thou bestowest,—a love that break-
eth the heart!
Mind that is ever prone to dissemble and
palter,

Hiding

Hiding its face like to children that shuffle
and falter !

Canst Thou in all the wide world no liberty
give,

No spot where, as a man thinketh, so he
may live ?

Bloom not the flowers of the field each
after his kind ?

Is e'er the lark in the nest of the sparrow
to find ?

Seeks ever the selfsame prize since the
world began,

The selfsame happiness, every heart of
man ?

Canst Thou endure that spirits created of
Thee

Cast in one mould and reckoned by num-
bers should be ?

Then,

Then, O our God, the gift of Thy tears
refuse to us not !

For a longing that ne'er can be stilled is
our poor humanity's lot.

Nay, worse ! All is cheat and delusion, a
lie in the face of high Heaven,

For to live as that which he is, to none has
the power been given !

The Cry for Justice

(Written after hearing "Tannhäuser" for the first time)

THE soul cries out to Heaven
For justice 'neath the sun ;
Too little are we punished
For all the evil done.

With God for peace we wrestle
In prayer and agony,—
Would give our heart's best treasure,
Might that atonement be.

If passionate repentance,
Ardent, profound, sincere,
If a whole life of penance
From sin might wash us clear,—

Ah,

Ah, then indeed no wonder
That men should watch and pray,
With hands outstretched to Heaven,
Beseeching, night and day.

No wonder that anointed
The cross has been with tears,
That the cold stone the impress
Of kneeling pilgrims bears.

The soul for peace that striveth
No task too bitter knows,—
He who the palm would conquer
Relinquishes the rose.

■

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